

3-3-2011

## Guest Artist Recital

Jack Liebeck

Louise Thomas

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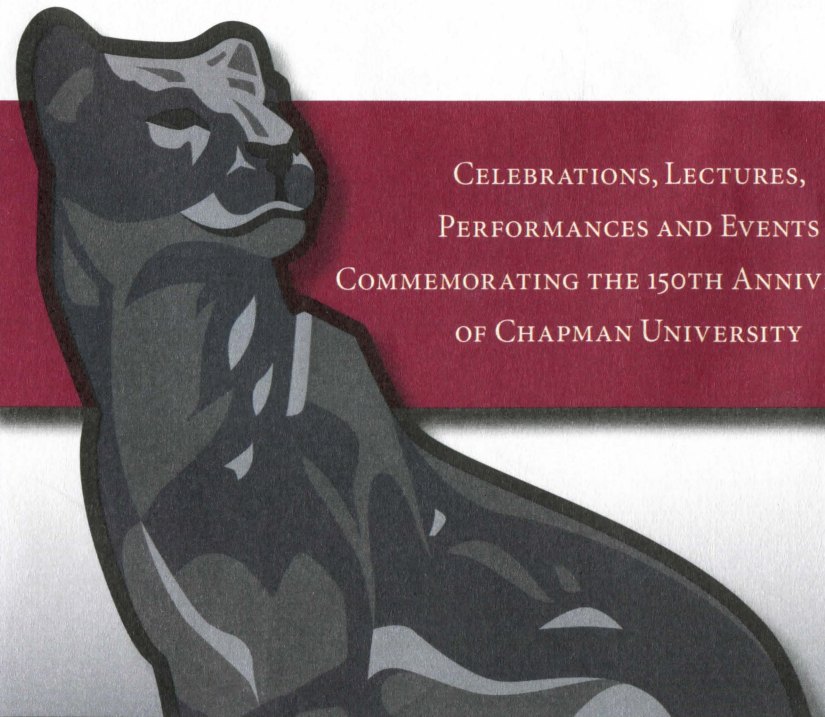
-- C.C. Chapman, *Lectures*

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*Chapman University  
Conservatory of Music*

*presents a*

*Guest Artist Recital*

*Jack Liebeck, violin  
Louise Thomas, piano*

*March 3, 2011 • 7:30p.m.  
Salmon Recital Hall*

## Program

*Sonata No. 5, Op. 24 "Spring"* L. van Beethoven  
*Allegro* (1770-1827)  
*Adagio molto espressivo*  
*Scherzo and Trio*  
*Rondo*

*Suite "Baal Shem"* E. Bloch  
*Vidui* (1880-1959)  
*Nigun*  
*Simchas*

## Intermission

*Sonata No. 1 in G Major* J. Brahms  
*Vivace ma non troppo* (1833-1897)  
*Adagio*  
*Allegro molto moderato*

*Waltz-Scherzo, Op. 34* P. Tchaikovsky  
(1840-1893)

## Program Notes

**Brahms** produced his first violin sonata as a young man of twenty, but, ever self-critical, he destroyed it and several others. The Scherzo of the "F-A-E" Sonata is the first work of his for violin and piano that remains extant and was also written when he was twenty in the aftermath of his seismic meeting with Clara and Robert Schumann. He waited more than twenty years before finally producing his first complete sonata, the intensely lyrical G major sonata in 1879. Like all his published violin works, it was crafted for his friend, the great virtuoso Joseph Joachim. Brahms wrote the G Major violin sonata while staying in the village of Portschach on the Worthersee in the Austrian province of Carinthia. This was a favourite holiday resort for Brahms, although it was very much a working holiday during his previous sojourn in the summer of 1878 he had completed his violin concerto. The beautiful pastoral feel of the Sonata was clearly influenced by Brahms' surroundings.

We are also aware of musical and literary influences from an inscription by Brahms on a presentation score of the first edition of the music, on which he sketched the opening bars of the Mozart's K301 Sonata, and of Beethoven's final violin Sonata in G Major, Op. 96. He also wrote a quotation from the Queen of Heaven in Goethe's Faust, "Come, rise to higher spheres". Like all of Brahms compositions for violin, and indeed viola, the sonata was strongly influenced by Brahms' friend and colleague the great virtuoso Joseph Joachim, who often played the Sonata in recitals. It was a particular favourite of the great unrequited love of Brahms' life, Clara Schumann, who said "Many others could perhaps understand it and speak about it better but no one could feel it more than I do". Some of the thematic material of the sonata is taken from two songs from Op. 59, "Rain song" and "Night Sounds". The gentle opening theme of the first movement sets the tone for the whole work. The violin is given license to sing over the reflective chords of the piano and imbues the music with an autumnal, melancholic and pastoral feel. The second movement begins with an extended piano solo in which slow chords drift reflectively before the mood darkens, with a majestic slow march almost funereal in character announced again by solo piano and then taken over by the violin. The movement resolves itself into a peaceful end with rising and falling chords on the piano. The finale begins restlessly with shimmering piano figures below a simple evocative melody from the violin. This movement contains the quotations from Op. 59 that lead to it often being known as the "Rain Sonata". All the tension and disquiet characterized in the movement by the contrast between the broad melody of the violin and the rippling

piano part resolves itself in the last few bars when the piano stills its restlessness and joins the violin in two final hushed chords in what is arguably the most beautiful end to a romantic violin sonata in the repertoire. Clara Schumann certainly thought so: on receiving the sonata from the composer, she wrote: "I played it at once, and could not help bursting into tears of joy over it. I wish the last movement could accompany me . . . to the next world."

**Ernest Bloch** was born in Switzerland where he began his studies on the violin and in composition; he subsequently studied the violin with the great virtuoso Ysaye. Bloch arrived in the USA on tour in 1916 and was then stranded when it collapsed in bankruptcy! However, he soon established himself as an important part of US musical life. He returned to Europe and lived mostly in Italy from 1930 to 1938. The overt threat of Fascism to Jews becoming ever more apparent, Bloch returned to the USA, settling in 1941 in the isolated coastal town of Agate Beach, Oregon, where he lived until his death in 1959 of cancer. Bloch produced among a large and varied output of compositions a distinctive oeuvre of works on Jewish themes, of which *Baal Shem* is probably the best known. "What interests me," wrote Bloch, "is the Jewish soul, the enigmatic, ardent, turbulent soul that I feel vibrating throughout the Bible...it is all this that I endeavor to hear in myself and to transcribe into my music."

*Baal Shem* was a mystic who founded the Hasidim sect, which believed in approaching God through song and dance. The first piece "Vidui" is soulful and stately, depicting a soul's return from darkness to light. The movement abounds with Bloch's idiomatic violin writing, reflecting his intimate knowledge of the instrument in extracting drama and pathos by extended passages on the G string, often in high positions. "Nigun" simulates the free improvisation of the cantor's chant during prayer again making frequent use of high G-string positions and rising to dramatic intensity before fading off into an echoing quiet immensity. The final "Simchas Torah" is in utter contrast to its predecessors, truly "rejoicing" in rapid and complex chordal passages on the violin and building to an intoxicating climax with that most frightening of all effects to bring off on a violin, a fortissimo artificial harmonic soaring almost beyond the sensitivity of the human ear. Albert Einstein, generally speaking not a fan of any modern music, said "I esteem the works of Ernest Bloch above those of any contemporary composer known to me".

Program notes: B. Foster

The majority of **Beethoven's** works for violin and keyboard were written between the years 1792 to 1819, with the ten violin sonatas

being perhaps the most significant addition to this repertoire. With these sonatas, Beethoven moved away from the tendency of earlier writings to have a very dominant keyboard part with essentially an optional violin accompaniment. Instead these sonatas truly showcase both violin and keyboard playing together, not one dominated by the other. The Sonata no. 5 was completed in 1801 and dedicated to Count Moritz von Fries, one of Beethoven's lesser known patrons from a Viennese banking firm. Some believe that this sonata received its nickname of "Spring" due to its gentle pastoral nature. The opening movement takes the form of a sonata and its melody is first heard by the violin. There is a contrasting second theme, which is much more energetic and chromatic, but it still manages to stay connected to the original mood portrayed from the start. The Adagio could be considered a "song without words" as the violin effortlessly soars through above the somewhat repetitious figures in the keyboard accompaniment. The Scherzo is short and fun, fitting since this is the first instance for Beethoven to include this movement in any of his violin sonatas. The Finale is a typical rondo and takes the listener from the safe home key to much more distant harmonic ranges, but it always returns to safety.

**Tchaikovsky's** great Violin Concerto was written in 1878. Leading up to this momentous undertaking, Tchaikovsky wrote several other smaller pieces for violin, which include the *Serenade melancolique*, op.26 in 1876 and the *Valse-Scherzo*, op.34 in 1877. Both of these pieces together can be considered to be studies for the more technically demanding Concerto. The *Valse-Scherzo* was written for one of Tchaikovsky's students, Yosif Yosifovich Kotek and was premiered sometime in October of that year. This flashy virtuoso showpiece is sure to dazzle the listener and leave them begging for more.

## Biographies

**Jack Liebeck** has established a reputation as one of Europe's most exciting young violinists. He was born in 1980 in London and studied at the Purcell School and the Royal Academy of Music. His first public appearance, aged ten, was for BBC television as the young Mozart. Performing in concertos and recitals since the age of eleven, Jack's appearances have taken him around the world. Since making his concerto debut with the Halle Orchestra, Jack has performed with many orchestras of international renown including the Philharmonia, Moscow State Symphony, Nieuw Sinfonietta Amsterdam, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, English Chamber, Bournemouth

Lausanne Chamber, Oslo Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National and the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestras. Jack has toured in the UK and abroad with the Belgian National, the English Chamber and the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestras and has appeared under the baton of many renowned conductors including Martyn Brabbins, Gunter Herbig, Alexander Lazarev, Sir Neville Marriner, Sakari Oramo, Libor Pesek, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Yuri Simonov, Leonard Slatkin, Bramwell Tovey and Barry Wordsworth.

His live performances have been broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and 4 and Television and on radio and television all over the world. He appears as a soloist on a Warner Classics disc of Oscar Wilde Fairy Tales narrated by Stephen Fry and Vanessa Redgrave with the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields under Sir Neville Marriner and on the movie soundtrack of "Middletown".

Jack Liebeck is a committed Chamber musician; partners have included Katya Apekisheva, Renaud and Gautier Capuçon, Bengt Forsberg, Itamar Golan, Lynn Harrell, Angela Hewitt, Tim Hugh, Piers Lane, Leon MacCawley, Charles Owen, Martin Roscoe, Jean-Yves Thibaudet and Ashley Wass. He has appeared at many major summer festivals including the Australian Festival of Chamber Music, Bath, Bergen, Cheltenham, Harrogate, Kuhmo, Montpellier, Montreux, Reims, Rheingau and Spoleto.

In 2002 Jack made his acclaimed London debut recital in a sold-out Wigmore Hall, to which he has often returned. In 2008 he made his US concerto debut, playing the Mendelssohn Concerto with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra under Douglas Boyd. Highlights this season include the Mozart G Major concerto with City of London Sinfonia; the Mendelssohn concerto with the English Chamber Orchestra; the Dvorak Concerto with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra; recitals in St. John's Smith Square in London, Leeds, Glasgow City Halls and the Wigmore Hall; and tours of Wales with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, of Australia and the USA. Jack will be returning to the Australian Chamber Music Festival in August for the fifth time and will also play in the Bangalow Festival in Queensland. In autumn of this year Jack will take up the position of Professor of Violin at the Royal Academy of Music, London.

Jack's debut recital disc on the Quartz label was released in July 2004 to enormous critical acclaim and a "Classical Brit Award" nomination. A similar reception greeted both his recent recordings for Sony Music, a CD of Dvorak's Concerto, Sonata and Sonatina and the complete Brahms Sonatas for violin and piano. Both were recorded with Jack's regular

chamber music partner, rising young pianist Katya Apekisheva. Jack was awarded a "Classical Brit" as "Young British Classical Performer" of 2010 for his Dvorak disk.

Jack is Artistic Director of the Oxford May Music Festival, now in its fourth season; he plays the 'Ex-Wilhelmj' J.B. Guadagnini dated 1785.

Mr. Liebeck's appearance is part of an interdisciplinary series featuring physicist Brian Foster and 2010 BRIT award-winning violinist Jack Liebeck.

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Pianist **Louise Thomas** is Director of Keyboard Collaborative Arts at Chapman University. She received her doctorate in piano performance from the University of Southern California where she studied with John Perry and Alan Smith.

A native of Ireland, Louise Thomas has concertized extensively throughout Europe, North America and Asia at such notable concert venues as the Tchaikovsky Conservatoire in Moscow, the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing and Carnegie Hall in New York City.

After completing undergraduate musicology studies at Trinity College, Dublin where she had developed a passion for music of the 20th century, Louise was offered a German Government scholarship (DAAD) to study piano performance at the Hochschule in Hannover, Germany. While a student there, she won second prize at the Ibla-Ragusa competition in Sicily where she was also awarded the Bela Bartók Prize. In 1993, she won the concerto competition at the University of Southern California and played under the baton of the late Sergiu Comissiona. This recording is currently available on K-USC's "Kids and Parents" CD.

A highly active collaborative pianist, Dr. Thomas has made CD recordings in Germany (as part of the chamber music festival, "Schwetzinger Festspielen"), at the Banff Center for the Arts in Canada with the Irish Contemporary Music group, Nua N6s, as well as appearing on numerous radio broadcasts for Irish Radio, BBC Radio Northern Ireland, Moscow radio, K-USC and K-MZT in Los Angeles. She has also played live and recorded many times for RTE (Irish National Television) and the nationally distributed Ovation Arts Channel in Los Angeles. Her recordings are available at iTunes.com

Louise Thomas has been invited onto the faculty of several summer programs. She has been the vocal coach at "La Fabbrica" in Tuscany and since 2003 has been the Festival pianist and vocal coach at the summer program of Idyllwild Arts Academy in California.

In 2007, she performed a program of "California Composers Today" at Carnegie Hall, continuing her commitment to the music of today.

